

EDAD 639: Administrative Practicum
Chadron State College
Forum Discussion – Chapter 6
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What role do ethics play in a healthy school climate and what strategies will you use to build strong ethical tenet within your building?

*“Treating people with respect is what moral leadership is all about.”
(Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998 pg. 167)*

Having been raised in a household that placed a strong emphasis on trust, hard work, and responsibility has clearly prepared me for practicing and modeling ethical behavior in education. Appropriate modeling and leadership in relation to ethical behavior is needed more than ever in schools today. Hoyle et.al. (1998) state, “the charge for school leaders is clear – model accepted moral and ethical behavior” (pg. 169). In communities large and small, the spotlight is always on teachers and educational leaders. Administrators and teachers must be cognizant of the expectations and perceptions of their role not only in the school system but also in the community. “As public employees, administrators and teachers have a responsibility that exceeds what is expected of other citizens” (Hackmann, Schmitt-Oliver, & Tracy, 2002 pg. 156). Hackmann et.al. (2002) further states, “because they serve as the heads of their organizations, superintendents and principals are the school system’s most visible leaders and, therefore, must be exemplars of moral leadership” (pg. 156). Growing up with a teacher/coach as a father and having experiences that I did as a teacher/coach has provided valuable real-life lessons as to community expectations, perceptions, and educators being held to higher societal standards.

Ethical behavior in education can be a topic that has the potential to ignite passionate conversations and provide multiple definitions of appropriate decision-making and practices. As ethical practices and modeling relates to school culture and climate, Hackmann et.al. (2002) state, “educational leaders have a moral responsibility to establish an ethical school environment in which education can take place ethically” (pg. 162). It is the responsibility of the educational leadership to ensure that effective support, modeling, and practices have been implemented that support the development and sustainment of a positive school culture/climate.

From a perspective of one that sees many different schools throughout the state, I have had the opportunity to observe ethical leadership and practice that supports/promotes a positive school climate. Each opportunity to be in a school provides me a chance to fill my toolkit with different leadership strategies. Conducting classroom/building walk-throughs, talking with students and teachers, providing meaningful/appropriate feedback, and making decisions that are not always popular but the right thing to do are just a few of the examples of ethical leadership that I would implement if provided the opportunity to become an educational leader in a school district. Some of these are more easily said than done, but as an ethical leader there are many people counting on you for your leadership, support, and guidance. In addition to practices that I have observed throughout different schools, Hackmann et.al. (2000) states, “the school leader can promote this ethic by attending to the school’s culture, assuring that school songs, symbols, and award ceremonies emphasize cooperation, teamwork, service, and caring for others” (pg. 164).

I have never served in an administrative role in a school, but have accepted leadership positions in education throughout my career. One of the main points that I try to focus on is in relation to the opening statement, “treating people with respect is what moral leadership is all about” (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998 pg. 167). If one wants respect it must not only be earned, but also demonstrated and provided to others. Administrators that want to establish a school culture based upon ethical leadership, he or she must have a firm understanding of what ethical leadership means to them and hold true to the established values that support the development and sustainment of a positive teaching and learning atmosphere.

References:

- Hackmann, D.G., Schmitt-Oliver, D.M., & Tracy, J.C. (2002). *The standards-based administrative internship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Hoyle, J.R., English, F.W., & Steffy, B.E. (1998). *Skills for successful 21st century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.